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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women

Follow-up to and implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The General Assembly, in its resolution 55/71 of 4 December 2000, requested the Secretary-General to report annually to it, through the Commission on the Status of Women and the Economic and Social Council, on follow-up to and progress in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women. Similar mandates were also contained in General Assembly resolutions 50/203, 51/69, 52/100 and 53/120. The present report emphasizes efforts undertaken by the Secretariat in support of gender mainstreaming and follow-up activities, including activities undertaken by non-governmental organizations, since the submission of the previous report of the Secretary-General on the subject (E/CN.6/2000/2).

The report on the joint work plan for the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights is being submitted as a separate report.

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I. Introduction

1. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1996/6, on follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women, established the work programme of the Commission on the Status of Women, in particular the items to be included in the agenda of the Commission. With regard to documentation for the sessions of the Commission, the Council decided, inter alia, that under item 3 (a) of the agenda of the Commission, a review by the Secretary-General of mainstreaming a gender perspective within the United Nations system should be prepared on an annual basis.

2. In its resolution 55/71 of 4 December 2000, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report annually to it, the Commission on the Status of Women and the Economic and Social Council on follow-up to and implementation of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action. Similar mandates were contained in General Assembly resolutions 50/203, 51/69, 52/100 and 53/120.

3. In each of the three reports submitted in the course of a year, the information that is most pertinent to the respective intergovernmental body is provided. The report to the Commission on the Status of Women emphasizes efforts undertaken by the Secretariat in support of gender mainstreaming and follow-up activities undertaken by non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The report to the Economic and Social Council focuses on facilitating the coordination function of the Council. The report to the General Assembly contains information from all entities of the United Nations system, including specialized agencies and international financial institutions, and an analysis of activities undertaken at the national level and by NGOs and other actors of civil society.

4. Section II of the present report has been prepared in compliance with General Assembly resolution 55/71. Section III responds to resolution 2000/23 of the Economic and Social Council on Palestinian women and to resolution 43/1 of the Commission on the Status of Women on the release of women and children taken hostage in armed conflict and imprisoned. The report of the Secretary-General on the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan submitted in response to Economic and Social Council resolution 2000/9 is before the Commission as an addendum to the present report (E/CN.6/2001/2/Add.1).

II. Progress in the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and in mainstreaming a gender perspective within the United Nations system

A. The General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council

1. Fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly

5. The report of the Secretary-General (A/55/341) on the implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century", also known as Beijing+5, provided an overview of the provisions and recommendations for action contained in the "Political declaration" and "Further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action" (resolutions S-23/2 and 3, respectively). Those instruments focus on areas where the Platform for Action has been strengthened and reinforced, on implementation measures at the national and international levels by Governments, the United Nations, NGOs and other actors. They also focus on recommendations that have immediate implications for action at the international level, including those for consideration by the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session.

6. In its resolution 55/71 of 4 December 2000, the General Assembly, welcoming the outcome of its twenty-third special session (ibid.) and stressing the importance of strong, sustained political will and commitment at the national, regional and international levels in order to achieve full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and outcome of that special session, reaffirmed that the United Nations system should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective, including through the work of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and through the maintenance of gender units and focal points in order to ensure the effective implementation of the strategic objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the Assembly.

7. In the same resolution, the Assembly reaffirmed the primary role of the General Assembly, Economic and Social Council and the Commission on the Status of Women in the overall policy-making, follow-up and coordination of the implementation and monitoring of the Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. The Council was invited to continue to promote a coordinated and integrated follow-up to and implementation of the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits and their reviews, and requested the Council further to intensify its efforts to ensure that gender mainstreaming is an integral part of all its activities concerning the follow-up.

8. The Council was also invited to continue to further policy coordination and inter-agency cooperation towards the achievement of the objectives of the Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.

9. The Assembly reaffirmed the central role of the Commission on the Status of Women in assisting the Economic and Social Council in monitoring, assessing progress made and accelerating the implementation of the Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly within the United Nations system, and in advising the Council thereon. In this respect, the Assembly noted that at its forty-fifth session in 2001, the Commission on the Status of Women would develop a new multi-year programme of work, and in this respect requested the Secretary-General to report to the Commission with recommendations for the effective implementation of the Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, including through enhancing the effectiveness of its work and its catalytic role in mainstreaming a gender perspective in United Nations activities.

10. The Assembly recognized the importance attached to the regional and subregional monitoring of the global and regional platforms for action and the implementation of the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly by regional commissions. In this respect, the Assembly called for the promotion of further cooperation among Governments and, where appropriate, national machineries of the same region. The Assembly also reaffirmed the need for mobilization of adequate resources at all levels, particularly in developing countries and countries with economies in transition in order to implement the Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.

2. Economic and Social Council, substantive session of 2000

11. In its decision 1999/281 of 30 July 1999, the Economic and Social Council decided that the theme for the high-level segment of its substantive session of 2000 would be "Development and international cooperation in the twenty-first century: the role of information technology in the context of a knowledge-based global economy". Consideration of this topic provided the Council with an opportunity to show that information communication technologies were central to the creation of a knowledge-based economy and society and that they could play an important role in accelerating growth, eradicating poverty and promoting sustainable development in developing countries and countries with economies in transition, particularly in facilitating their beneficial integration into the global economy.

12. For the first time, during its substantive session of 2000, the Council undertook a comprehensive assessment of conference review processes. At its coordination segment, the Council assessed progress made within the United Nations system, through the conference reviews, in promotion of an integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields. Based on an examination of lessons learned from the five-year reviews of conferences conducted to date, the report of the Secretary-General (E/2000/57) on the issue makes a number of proposals to assist the Economic and Social Council in its guidance to its subsidiary bodies with respect to the upcoming 10-year reviews of the conferences of the 1990s as well as in further enhancing its work on conference follow-up. The report also discusses the progress in implementing the conferences in a more integrated and coordinated manner at the national and international levels and makes a number of suggestions to ensure that the United Nations system provides enhanced support in this regard.

13. The report draws attention to overlapping consideration of cross-cutting issues and conference goals and points out that gender perspectives have not been consistently mainstreamed in the five-year

reviews despite guidance on the topic in agreed conclusions 1997/2. However, the Council's efforts to support a more integrated and coordinated follow-up could reinforce the cross-cutting nature of the recent five-year reviews, including the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, and ensure the full incorporation of that outcome in follow-up activities of all organizations of the United Nations system (A/55/341, para. 35).

14. During the substantive session of 2000, the Council adopted a number of resolutions, agreed conclusions and decisions. The Council specifically addressed its subsidiary bodies, including functional commissions, in the agreed conclusions and resolutions and called on them to take necessary measures to implement the policy recommendations in their work and, where appropriate, communicate to the Council any specific follow-up actions.

15. In its agreed conclusions 2000/2 of 27 July 2000, on the integrated and coordinated follow-up to major United Nations conferences, the Council invited its relevant functional commissions to consider a number of options listed in paragraph 33 of the report of the Secretary-General (E/2000/57) for enhancing the reviews of the major United Nations conferences and summits and to inform the Council for its consideration at its substantive session in 2001 of the outcome of their discussion. The Council suggested that particular attention should be given to the periodicity of the conference reviews. The Council also recommended that functional commissions, in reviewing their options, should consider ways and means of ensuring their capacity to conduct follow-up of conference implementation.

16. The Council also adopted, on 28 July 2000, resolution 2000/26, entitled "The role of employment and work in poverty eradication: empowerment and advancement of women". The Council noted with concern the persistent problems in addressing the challenges of poverty eradication, gender inequalities, empowerment and advancement of women and employment, as reflected in the outcome documents of the recent five-year reviews of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the World Summit for Social Development.

17. The Council therefore strongly encouraged Governments to pursue and strengthen their efforts to work towards achieving the goals of poverty eradication and reiterated the call for the relevant organizations of the United Nations system and the international community to take consistent, coherent, coordinated and joint action in support of national efforts to eradicate poverty, with particular attention to employment creation and work and the empowerment and advancement of women. The Council urged all States that had not yet ratified or acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women to do so, and also to consider signing and ratifying or acceding to the Optional Protocol.

18. A draft decision on the participation of NGOs not in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council in the work of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission for Social Development was submitted to the Council for adoption during its substantive session. The Council decided, on an exceptional basis and as an interim measure, to invite those NGOs accredited to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and/or the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly to attend the forty-fifth session of the Commission on the Status of Women and the thirty-ninth session of the Commission on Social Development, provided that they had started the process of applying for consultative status in accordance with Council decision 1996/315 of 14 November 1996. The decision was adopted by consensus under the new title "Participation of NGOs in the forty-fifth session of the Commission on the Status of Women and the thirty-ninth session of the Commission on Social Development".

B. Activities in support of mainstreaming gender perspectives into the work of the United Nations system

19. The Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women has continued systematically to promote, facilitate and monitor the integration of gender perspectives into all areas of the work of the United Nations system, in accordance with the Economic and Social Council agreed conclusions 1997/2 on gender mainstreaming and their subsequent communication by the Secretary-General to heads of all departments, agencies, funds, programmes and regional commissions, as well as the renewed mandate

on gender mainstreaming contained in the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly to follow up implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (resolution 55/71 of 4 December 2000). With the additional resource of a Principal Officer on Gender Mainstreaming, it has been possible to strengthen the catalytic and advisory work of the Office of the Special Adviser through initiating more in-depth processes of consultation with senior managers and competence development inputs. The Special Adviser also gave particular attention to the preparations for the special session of the General Assembly in June 2000, including inter-agency collaboration. A summary of such activities is given below.

20. The Special Adviser continued to meet with senior United Nations officials stationed away from New York during their missions to Headquarters, to discuss implementation of the Platform for Action, particularly the mainstreaming strategy, as well as equal opportunities for women and men in the United Nations, including gender balance. During 2000, for example, meetings were held with the Executive Secretaries of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Deputy Executive Secretaries of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and ESCAP, the Executive Directors of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and the United Nations Coordinator for Afghanistan and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan.

21. The Special Adviser also met with senior officials in United Nations entities and held inter-agency meetings with gender focal points and field-based United Nations representatives during visits to Geneva in March and June 2000 and Egypt in October 2000. These meetings allowed for exchange of information on specific steps taken to increase gender mainstreaming, gender balance and a gender-sensitive work environment, as well as on the preparations for or follow-up to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. For example, in conjunction with attendance at the twenty-fourth special session to follow up the World Social Summit at Geneva, a meeting was held with OHCHR on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol, follow-up to the special session and the efforts of OHCHR to promote gender mainstreaming. An informal meeting was held with the Geneva-based members of the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality. Other meetings were held with the United Nations Information Service at Geneva, United Nations Office at Geneva, and the Board of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW). In conjunction with the Special Adviser's attendance at the First Summit of Arab First Ladies on Current Challenges and Future Prospects, held in Cairo from 18 to 20 November 2000, meetings were held with representatives of the United Nations Egypt Country Team.[1]

22. The Special Adviser continued to meet with the heads of departments and agencies to discuss gender mainstreaming, for example, UNDP, UNICEF, and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Visits were made by the Principal Officer for Gender Mainstreaming in the Office of the Special Adviser to ESCWA in April 2000 and ECE in November 2000. Through a process of consultation with senior managers, concrete recommendations for increasing the incorporation of gender perspectives into work programmes were developed.

23. In its resolution 2000/9, the Economic and Social Council urged the Secretary-General to ensure that a gender perspective is fully incorporated into the work of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan and to continue to review the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan and report to the Commission on the Status of Women. The Office of the Special Adviser has remained actively involved in the work of the Afghanistan Support Group and continues to support the work of the Gender Adviser to the United Nations system in Afghanistan.

24. Information and reports prepared by the Gender Adviser on the current situation and its implications for United Nations system activities have been regularly shared with the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality. The relevant report of the Secretary-General is before the Commission at the current session (E/CN.6/2001/2/Add.1).

25. Collaboration between the Office of the Special Adviser and the Office of Human Resources Management was established for the development of a

framework for competence development in gender mainstreaming and a resource base of facilitators. The competence development programme for all divisions in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs was initiated in October 2000.

26. To promote greater understanding of how gender perspectives could be incorporated into different sectors, briefing notes were prepared by the Office of the Special Adviser in collaboration with various United Nations entities. The briefing notes outline the linkages between gender perspectives and the sector issues, indicate ways and means of bringing attention to gender perspectives and provide resource listings on where to go for more support — publications, guidelines, manuals and web sites. A series of briefing notes has been completed on gender and disarmament within the Department for Disarmament Affairs that are used internally in the department to foster greater awareness, commitment and capacity on gender mainstreaming. Similar series were prepared on macroeconomics, trade, statistics, environment and a number of other individual sectors/issues in the work programmes of the regional commissions.

27. A framework has been developed for assessing progress towards gender mainstreaming, utilizing the concrete guidelines included in the Economic and Social Council agreed conclusions 1997/2, the letter of the Secretary-General of October 1997 and the outcome of the special session of the Assembly in June 2000. The framework will facilitate more systematic and effective reporting on gender mainstreaming and provide a monitoring tool for the Special Adviser in her efforts to promote and support gender mainstreaming throughout the system.

28. An Inter-Agency Steering Committee for the Special Session, chaired by the Special Adviser, met regularly to ensure coordination and collaboration in preparations for the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. Members of the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality were encouraged to make specific contributions to the preparations through producing studies and organizing side-events in conjunction with the special session. The Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women participated in the regional preparatory meeting of ECE, and was represented at the regional preparatory meeting of ECLAC. The Special Adviser attended the ILO Symposium on Beijing+5 entitled "Decent work for women: ILO's Contribution to Women 2000", which was held at Geneva in March 2000.

29. The Office of the Special Adviser and the Division for the Advancement of Women continued to collaborate with the Lessons Learned Unit of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in the implementation of the project on gender perspectives in multidimensional peacekeeping operations. The overall findings were published in October 2000 and case studies from a number of individual missions are under preparation. In conjunction with the project, a workshop was held in Namibia in May 2000. The resulting Windhoek Declaration and Namibia Plan of Action provide greater clarity on gender mainstreaming in the area of peacekeeping. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations established gender units in both Kosovo, in 1999, and East Timor, in 2000, to promote incorporation of gender perspectives in all aspects of the work of the missions. The Office of the Special Adviser has supported the efforts of the Department by providing advice and support to the Gender Units on request. Efforts were made to influence the implementation plans developed on the basis of the Brahimi report from a gender perspective, including through the recommendation for a Gender Unit in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

30. The Special Adviser and the Executive Director of UNIFEM were invited to address the special session of the Security Council on women, peace and security. The resulting Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) provides a strengthened mandate for gender mainstreaming in peace support operations. To ensure collaboration and coordination of the efforts of the relevant parts of the United Nations system in promoting, facilitating and supporting the incorporation of gender perspectives into peace support operations, an inter-agency task force was established as part of the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality.

31. As part of follow-up to General Assembly resolution 52/100 of 12 December 1997 and Economic and Social Council agreed conclusions 1997/2 of 18 July 1997, in which the General Assembly and the Council, respectively, requested all bodies dealing with programme and budgetary matters to ensure that programmes, medium-term plans and programme budgets visibly mainstream gender perspectives, as well as the strong emphasis in the outcome of the Beijing+5 special session on budgetary processes and

resource allocations, many departments and regional commissions increased their attention to gender perspectives in the medium-term plans for 2002-2005. Many programmes, e.g., the programmes on peacekeeping, human settlements, human rights, protection of and assistance to refugees, trade and development and the programmes of all the regional commissions, have moved beyond a general mention of gender mainstreaming in the introductory section to more specific attention to gender perspectives in subprogrammes.

32. The Programme Planning and Budget Division in the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts, prepared clear instructions for the programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003. Programme managers were requested to ensure that in all subprogrammes at least one accomplishment with an appropriate indicator reflects the gender dimensions of the work. All entities in the United Nations have made efforts to identify and incorporate gender perspectives in their submissions. The work on planning and budgetary processes is supported by the work carried out in the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality task force on gender mainstreaming in budget processes.

33. The Department of Political Affairs participated in an Inter-Agency Committee project on gender mainstreaming in programme budgets, which included a workshop for managers within the department to discuss how gender perspectives could be more effectively incorporated in programme budgets.

34. The Department for Disarmament Affairs moved beyond encouraging the nomination of female candidates to its fellowship programme, to including a briefing for the fellows on gender perspectives in all areas of disarmament — small arms, weapons of mass destruction, landmines, disarmament, demobilization and rehabilitation programmes and disarmament for development initiatives.

35. The Division for the Advancement of Women in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in collaboration with UNDP, organized a seminar on gender mainstreaming in the governance and poverty programmes of the Africa Branch of UNDP.[2]

36. OHCHR's policy statement on gender mainstreaming and the human rights of women is now included as part of OHCHR's web site. A series of two-day workshops was organized for all staff at Geneva and gender perspectives have been included in the human rights training manuals for judges, prison guards and police officers. A draft checklist for integrating gender perspectives into all aspects of OHCHR's work has also been developed.

37. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has documented three success stories on gender and environment. A framework for a global network of gender and environment focal points from both Governments and NGOs is being finalized. The focal point system would provide an opportunity for information exchange and data collection as well as capacity-building at the national, regional and global levels.

38. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) held an expert workshop prior to UNCTAD X, which was held in Bangkok, from 12 to 19 February 2000, to discuss gender perspectives in trade and development. The workshop recognized that the process of globalization brings a number of new challenges to the promotion of gender equality. Concrete recommendations were made to UNCTAD X concerning the integration of gender concerns into regular sessions of the Trade and Development Board; incorporation of gender perspectives into analytical work, policy development and flagship publications of UNCTAD; identification of good practices; promotion of full and equal participation of women in trade-related activities at all levels; and development of a strategy for making gender perspectives a core part of UNCTAD activities.

C. ACC Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality

39. The Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality (IACWGE), chaired by the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, has continued to provide an excellent forum for fostering and facilitating greater attention to gender perspectives in substantive work of the United Nations and supporting increased collaboration and coordination throughout the system. The Committee continues to carry out its work programme through task forces with clearly defined and time-limited mandates. The task forces report to the Committee as a whole and the Committee adopts their annual work programmes.

40. Following the fifth session of the IACWGE, from 23 to 25 February 2000, inter-sessional work was conducted on a number of topics by the Committee's task forces. Task forces have continued to be active in the following areas under the guidance of the designated task managers: gender focal points — UNFPA; compilation of good practices in implementing the Platform for Action — UNIFEM; database on gender training materials — UNICEF and UNDP; tools and indicators for gender impact analysis, monitoring and evaluation — ECLAC in collaboration with the other regional commissions; and gender mainstreaming in programme budgets — Office of the Special Adviser. Several of these were expected to be concluded at the Committee's next session in February 2001. Two new task forces established at the fifth session of the Committee began to initiate activities: gender mainstreaming in the Common Country Assessment/United Nations Development Assistance Framework (CCA/UNDAF) process — UNIFEM; and gender and information and communication technologies — International Telecommunication Union (ITU). A series of informal meetings was held in New York during 2000, particularly on the preparations and follow-up to the Beijing+5 special session, and the Geneva-based members of the Committee continued to meet regularly.

41. Based on the recommendation of the Inter-Agency Committee at its fourth session in February 1999, the ACC submitted a statement to the General Assembly at its twenty-third special session (A/S-23/8, annex). In their statement, members of the ACC commit themselves to accelerate the implementation of the Platform for Action and to promote gender mainstreaming within their organizations.

42. An Inter-Agency Steering Committee for the Beijing+5 special session, chaired by the Special Adviser, met regularly to ensure coordination of preparations, and the Deputy Secretary-General met with senior United Nations officials on preparations for the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: Gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century". During the special session members of the Inter-Agency Committee prepared panels, presentations and exhibitions. The task forces on good practices in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action and on gender training materials launched their databases during the special session. In conjunction with the Beijing+5 special session, the task force on gender mainstreaming in programme budgets organized a workshop to present the findings of their work.

43. In response to recent developments, the Inter-Agency Committee established two new task forces. A task force on financing for development (ILO) would work to influence the preparations for the "high-level intergovernmental event" which will consider issues relating to financing for development, scheduled to take place in March 2002. The task force on women, peace and security, chaired by the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, provided input to the discussion of the Security Council on women, peace and security on 24 October 2000, and was preparing an action plan for the collaborative and coordinated implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) in the United Nations system.

44. The Committee continued its active collaboration with the OECD/DAC Working Party on Gender Equality. The annual joint workshop on governance, poverty reduction and gender equality was, however, postponed from October 2000 to early 2001. The sixth session of the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality will take place in New York from 26 February to 2 March 2001.

D. Expert group meetings and other activities organized by the Division for the Advancement of Women

1. Expert group meeting on the HIV/AIDS pandemic and its gender implications

45. International experts gathered in Windhoek from 13 to 17 November 2000 in a meeting on "The HIV/AIDS pandemic and its gender implications", organized by the United Nations Secretariat Division for the Advancement of Women in collaboration with WHO and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). The Namibian Government hosted the meeting, which brought together experts and observers from different regions working on HIV/AIDS as well as observers from Governments, the United Nations system and NGOs. The meeting addressed the seriousness of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, especially in Africa, and its gender dimensions.

46. Experts concluded that the HIV/AIDS pandemic must be regarded as a disaster that required gender-

sensitive short-term relief measures to alleviate immediate emergencies and long-term interventions that transformed relations between women and men to eliminate gender inequality and reduce the risk of infection. It urged Governments and the international community to distribute immediately emergency food aid, including nutrient supplements and home-based care packs to women and men living with and affected by HIV/AIDS in the most severely affected countries and regions of the world.

47. The role of men and changes in gender relations were considered key elements in fighting the pandemic. Experts appealed to Governments, international organizations and NGOs to upscale significantly their work with men to challenge gender inequalities in relation to HIV and AIDS, and to encourage men's fuller participation in prevention, impact alleviation and care.

48. The experts' recommendations have been forwarded to the Commission on the Status of Women at the current session, at which it would consider "Women, the girl-child and HIV/AIDS" as a priority theme.

2. Expert group meeting on gender and racial discrimination

49. The Division for the Advancement of Women, in collaboration with OHCHR and UNIFEM, organized an expert group meeting on the theme of "Gender and racial discrimination". The meeting was hosted by the Government of Croatia in Zagreb, and took place from 21 to 24 November 2000.

50. The meeting was convened to consider the intersection of gender and racial discrimination and its consequences, as well as new and emerging manifestations of racism, xenophobia and related intolerance and the difficulties that women encountered in that respect.

51. The meeting considered three main topics: the intersection of gender and racial discrimination directed towards women and girls, such as ethnic/gender-based violence and trafficking; the disadvantages, obstacles and difficulties women face in the enjoyment of economic, social, cultural, political and civil rights as a result of the intersection of racial and sex discrimination both in public and private domain; and measures to eradicate racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and their specific effects on women and girls and provision of remedies and redress.

52. The expert group meeting made recommendations directed to Governments, the United Nations system, intergovernmental and regional bodies and civil society. The recommendations aimed to refine and expand the "actions to be taken" at both international and national levels outlined in the Beijing Platform for Action, as well as the further actions identified by the special session of the General Assembly on Beijing+5.

53. The results of the meeting have been made available to the Commission on the Status of Women at its current session, at which it would take up, inter alia, the thematic issue of gender and all forms of discrimination, in particular racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has indicated that the meeting's results would be included in the preparations for the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, as well as the World Conference itself, which will take place in Durban, South Africa, from 31 August to 7 September 2001.

3. Meeting on the draft rules of procedure of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

54. Members of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women met in Berlin at the invitation of the Government of Germany, from 27 to 30 November 2000. The purpose of the meeting was to review and finalize the draft rules of procedure for the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Two members of the Human Rights Committee served as resource persons, and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights was also represented.

55. The draft rules of procedure, which were finalized at the meeting, were subsequently adopted by the Committee at its twenty-fourth session in January 2001. The Optional Protocol to the Convention entered into force on 22 December 2000.

4. Advisory services provided by the Division for the Advancement of Women

56. The Gender Advisory Services Unit of the Division for the Advancement of Women of the

Department for Economic and Social Affairs implements technical cooperation programmes for the advancement of women and gender equality. This technical cooperation depends on Member States' requirements for technical support. Most Member States have begun to indicate a shift in government policy in terms of recognition of a gender equality approach to policy design, formulation and implementation.

57. In this context, the setting up and/or strengthening of institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women became an essential tool to move the gender equality agenda forward. However, national machineries were often marginalized and lack the capacity and resources to play a more effective role. The Division currently collaborates with the Division for Public Economics and Public Administration to address these issues. They have established a task force to provide technical support for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of a project aimed at building the capacity of national machineries to promote gender equality in Africa. The project would promote mainstreaming of a gender perspective in national planning through a needs assessment and subregional workshops on gender sensitive national planning. It would also strengthen the data collection and analysis capacity to produce sex-disaggregated data related to the Convention as well as management information systems. To launch the project, a consultation meeting was organized on 12 June 2000 that brought together participants from Africa to implement the Secretary-General's directive to give priority to Africa's urgent development challenges, and the Arab, Caribbean, European, and Asia Pacific regions for an interregional perspective. Representatives from ECA and ESCWA and United Nations agencies such as UNFPA, UNDP and UNIFEM also participated.

58. The Division for the Advancement of Women carried out a study in collaboration with UNDP/Africa to assess gender mainstreaming activities in UNDP's governance and poverty eradication programme. The assessment was conducted in 22 sub-Saharan countries and completed in January 2000. A technical review meeting was held on 20 and 21 March to discuss the findings of the study. Participants included representatives from country offices, other divisions in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs as well as United Nations agencies, including UNFPA and UNIFEM. A report summarizing the discussions and recommendations includes a work plan prioritizing these recommendations as immediate, short-term and medium-term action. The results of the study will be launched on International Women's Day on 8 March 2001.

E. Reported activities of non-governmental organizations and other institutions of civil society

59. Since the issuance of the report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session on follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (A/55/293), a number of events have occurred at the international, regional and national levels under the auspices of NGOs. While these activities were not reported systematically to the Secretariat, some were brought to the attention of the Division for the Advancement of Women and were noted as examples of the widespread follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly by civil society.

60. Initiated by the Fédération des Femmes du Québec, a Canadian NGO, the World March of Women 2000, a global initiative that involved approximately 5,000 NGOs from 159 countries, culminated in New York in October 2000. Participants in each country conducted grass-roots activities to bring attention to, and develop proposals for addressing, the issues of poverty and violence against women. The march and the signed petitions highlighted and drew attention to the need for concrete measures to eliminate poverty, to ensure an equitable distribution of the world's wealth, to eradicate violence against women, and to ensure equality between women and men. A panel discussion was held on 17 October 2000 at the United Nations to mark the culmination of the World March of Women 2000, and the commemoration of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. An international delegation, made up of 250 participants of the March, attended the panel discussion, which was addressed by the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations.

61. The International Criminal Court Women's Caucus for Gender Justice coordinated a one-day public hearing on crimes against women in recent wars

and conflict situations as a part of the Tokyo Tribunal 2000. The one-day public hearing, coordinated by the Women's Caucus for Gender Justice and co-sponsored by VAWW-Net Japan and ASCENT, included testimonies of victims and survivors of wars and conflicts in different regions of the globe.

62. The International Women's Tribune Center launched its web site, providing another link for women on the Internet. The site was designed to provide web addresses for a number of organizations for women and girls, thereby enabling networking.

63. African NGOs met in Accra, Ghana, in October 2000 to review the "case stories" they had drafted for the second meeting on the "African Best Practices for Gender Integration" publication. The meeting brought together nine NGO representatives from seven African countries, and was co-sponsored by the Gender Development Institute of Ghana and the Commission on the Advancement of Women. The Commission on the Advancement of Women aims to launch this publication at the annual Forum.

64. The NGO Women and Armed Conflict Caucus began to work towards bringing gender perspectives on armed conflict to the attention of the Security Council following the Security Council press release on women and peace issued for International Women's Day (8 March 2000). The Caucus facilitated the presentation of the views of women from armed conflict zones to Security Council delegations and relevant United Nations departments at events and private meetings during the forty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, in March 2000, and the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, in June 2000. The Coalition on Women and International Peace and Security was formed by members of the caucus based in New York and London specifically to coordinate preparation of the Arria Formula Meeting, held on 23 October 2000, and the meeting of the Security Council on women and peace and security. The Coalition was coordinated by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and included Amnesty International, the International Peace Research Association, The Hague Appeal for Peace, the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children and International Alert. The Coalition worked closely with the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, UNIFEM and the Namibian delegation to the United Nations, in identifying appropriate experts from the field for the Arria Formula briefing by NGOs to Security Council members. It also assisted in widely publicizing the meeting held on 24 October 2000 and Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) adopted on 31 October 2000. The Coalition intends to continue to monitor implementation of the resolution.

65. The NGO Community on the Status of Women launched a LISTSERV to connect women worldwide with timely information coming out of the United Nations in New York. It initially targeted women who indicated an interest at the Beijing+5 meetings, and gave subscribers email information about the Commission on the Status of Women meetings and NGO events, and was designed to assist the NGO community in follow-up to Beijing+5.

66. NGOs have advanced gender issues for interaction at the special session of the General Assembly on children to be held from 19 to 21 September 2001. Organizations like the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, the Working Group on Girls of the NGO Committee on UNICEF, the International Federation of University Women, ESCAP and others interested in gender issues affecting children, hosted workshops on various subjects, including HIV/AIDS, emerging health issues affecting girls, education of refugee girls, tolerance and reconciliation, sexual exploitation of girls, and violence against girls. They were presented as part of an NGO programme to provide Governments and NGOs with information for drafting the outcome document of the Beijing+5 special session. The workshops were held in conjunction with the second session of the Preparatory Committee in January 2000.

67. Women'sNet, which aims to empower women to use information and communication technologies more effectively in their struggle towards advancing women's equality, received an "Innovative users of Internet" award at the Highway Africa Conference 2000. The spirit of the award was to inspire greater use of the Internet on the African continent. It is the only web site of its kind in South Africa. In an attempt to make this kind of information accessible to a wider community, Women'sNet forges partnerships with gender organizations and networks across South Africa and Africa. It has also started a community radio project.

68. In July 2000, 35 representatives of water management, water users and information

organizations from Asia, Africa, South America and Europe met in Paris for three days to define the tasks of the newly formed Gender and Water Alliance. Initiated at the Second World Water Forum, in March 2000, the Gender and Water Alliance is an informal network of individuals, NGOs, resource centres, research institutions, grass-roots organizations, and regional, national and local institutions. Its goal was to achieve equality among women and men, regarding participation and decision-making in the water resources management.

69. The International Women's Democracy Centre, in partnership with the Ulster People's College in Belfast, Northern Ireland, brought together women leaders from Northern Ireland for a two-week programme to learn the process of lobbying. Designed to develop and strengthen their public policy, advocacy and lobbying skills, the hands-on, innovative training programme combined theoretical learning and practical experience focusing on the interaction of the legislative, judicial and executive branches of government with the public and private sectors to create public policy. The diverse group came from both rural and urban areas and different regional backgrounds.

70. Latin American countries and a growing number of other countries around the world have recognized 25 November as the International Day Against Violence Against Women. It was first celebrated by the first Feminist Encuentro for Latin America and the Caribbean held in Bogota, Colombia, from 18 to 21 July 1981, when women systematically denounced gender violence from domestic battery to rape and sexual harassment, to state violence, including torture and abuse of women political prisoners. On 17 December 1999, the United Nations adopted resolution 54/134, designating 25 November as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. The first observance of the Day in the United Nations was held on 25 November 2000.

71. The World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts launched an initiative to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS in November 2000. Ten million girl guides and girl scouts in 150 countries earned a badge through specific activities that would help prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS or for projects that help persons infected with HIV/AIDS. The World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, International Council of AIDS Service Organizations and UNAIDS developed resource materials, which were distributed in December 2000 to all national organizations of WAGGGS.

III. Information supplied in accordance with specific mandates

A. Situation of Palestinian women and assistance provided by organizations in the United Nations system

72. In its resolution 2000/23 of 28 July 2000, the Economic and Social Council requested a report on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women. The present report, which covers the period from September 1999 to September 2000, is based on information from United Nations bodies that monitor the situation of Palestinians in the occupied territories and refugee camps. Such bodies include the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories[3] and the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on Palestinian Territories occupied since 1967. The report is also based on information submitted by entities of the United Nations system providing assistance to Palestinian people, i.e., ESCWA, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), ILO, the World Bank and UNICEF.

1. Situation of Palestinian women

73. In his report on the Palestinian economy, the United Nations Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories stated that, according to estimates from the Palestinian Ministry of Finance and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Palestinian economy improved in 1998: real gross domestic product (GDP) grew by about 7 per cent; Palestinian labour flows to Israel by 15 per cent; Israeli-Palestinian trade by 9 per cent. Donors' assistance increased by 12 per cent. In addition, the Palestinian Ministry of Finance and IMF revised their growth forecasts for 1999 upward to 6 per cent. In 1999, employment and labour force participation both increased so that the combined effect on the unemployment rate was a decline to 12.7 per cent from 15.6 per cent in 1998.[4]

74. Women's employment and participation in the labour force grew faster than for men. This could be explained by the rapid expansion in the agriculture and services sectors, including public services, where women were present in high numbers.[5] However, women were still found mainly in part-time jobs. In 1999, the proportion of women working less than 35 hours per week increased by 34.76 per cent while the same figure for men fell by 11.66 per cent. This tendency might have resulted from two factors. First, in the expanding agricultural sector women perform unpaid work, which is therefore not accounted for; secondly, married women tend to seek part-time jobs to increase the household income. Unemployment figures in 1999 suggest that the gap between women and men widened. In fact, while the number of unemployed men fell significantly — by 14.45 per cent — the number of unemployed women was nearly unchanged, falling only by 1.80 per cent.[5]

75. In 1999 there was no reduction in the severity of the closure policy applied by Israel to the occupied territories. Personal mobility remained severely restricted as Palestinians could not travel freely between the West Bank and Gaza Strip, or enter Jerusalem without permits from the Israeli authorities. Palestinian public agencies, businesses, NGOs and international agencies continued to experience higher transaction costs, time delays, and loss of productivity as a result of restrictions in the movement of personnel and goods at border crossings.[5]

76. The report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (A/55/373) stated that closures and restrictions at checkpoints continued to remain a cause of concern to Palestinians. For instance, on 9 February 2000, Israeli soldiers raided a Palestinian house and held family members, including women and children, at gunpoint. One woman suffered a heart attack. As the car transporting her to the hospital was delayed at an Israeli checkpoint (ibid., para. 84) she died.

77. The Special Rapporteur on Palestinian Territories occupied since 1967, Mr. Giorgio Giacomelli (Italy), in his report to the Commission on Human Rights stated that the Israeli policy of closures and permits also affected the right to education as it had serious repercussions for students in the Gaza Strip. In fact, more than 1,300 students from Gaza were prevented from studying at universities and Palestinian institutions of higher education in the West Bank because Israel considered them to be a security risk (E/CN.4/2000/25, para. 47). In the same report, the Special Rapporteur noted that the issue of Palestinian prisoners detained in Israeli prisons remained a source of great concern. Although there had been releases of Palestinian (political) prisoners, within the framework of the peace agreements, the number remained high at 1,500. The conditions of detention were below international standards and difficulties of access to prisoners were faced by their lawyers as well as by their families.

78. The Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, reported that, in Ramallah, at various times, the General Security Service had banned parents, wives and siblings of 200 prisoners from visiting them (A/55/373, para. 114). The Special Committee also reported that the prison service had withheld permission for a British physician to examine the condition of a 16-year-old Palestinian girl detained in Ramle (ibid., para. 110).

79. As noted by the Special Rapporteur, harsh prison sentences often had the effect of taking fathers away from children and, upon their release from prison, led to an incidence of violence in the family. As a consequence, in many cases, men lost their protective and breadwinner's role within the household while women were forced to take additional burdens and acquire roles other than the ones traditionally performed by them (see E/CN.4/2000/25, para. 43) in order to provide for all the economic and social needs of the family. It is important to note two aspects related to women taking on new roles: on the one hand, it might lead to conflicts within the family due to the difficulty in adapting to and accepting change; on the other, it might provide opportunities for women's empowerment as women gain new decision-making power within the household.

80. The expansion of Israeli settlements, the demolishing of Palestinian homes and the building of bypass roads in the occupied territories continued to create difficulties for the Palestinians. In particular, the demolishing of houses in Jerusalem often forced families to consider moving to the West Bank, where it would have been cheaper to buy or rent another house, but where they would have lost their residency rights.

An incident of this kind was reported by the Special Committee (see A/55/373, para. 57).

81. The report of the Special Committee also stated that, according to the Palestinian Authority's Ministry of Health, the toxic gas pollution of the West Bank's water sources controlled by Israel, caused numerous miscarriages among Palestinian women (ibid., para. 60) living in the West Bank.

82. As the present report covers the period September 1999 to September 2000, it does not contain information related to the effects of the violent confrontation between Palestinian civilians and Israeli security forces that erupted at the end of September 2000. Clashes spread provoking numerous deaths, particularly among Palestinian civilians, including youth. Such violence had negative economic and social effects in the occupied territories as well as serious repercussions on the peace process and on the ability of the organizations of the United Nations system to operate effectively in the occupied territories.

2. Assistance to Palestinian women

83. The organizations of the United Nations system continued to provide assistance to Palestinian people, in particular women.

84. During the period under review, ESCWA prepared a study on gender and citizenship and the role of NGOs in the occupied territories, aimed at proposing action-oriented policy recommendations to inculcate a gender-sensitive citizenship in post-conflict countries. ESCWA organized a workshop for producers and users of sex-disaggregated data in the occupied territories and started ongoing projects such as a database on Palestinian refugees in the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon; a regional household survey in the occupied territories; and the development of national gender statistics in the Arab countries, including the occupied territories.

85. UNRWA provides essential education, health, relief and social services to some 3.7 million registered Palestine refugees in the Agency's area of operations comprising Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Assistance to Palestinian women is a priority, delivered within the context of the Agency's regular programmes for Palestine refugees.

86. During the period under review, UNRWA began a review of its gender policies with external technical expertise and funding from the Government of Denmark. The review sought to align the Agency's gender policy and practice more closely with the framework and targets agreed at the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women and subsequently reviewed at the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century".

87. In the 1999/2000 scholastic year, 468,651 pupils were enrolled in the Agency's elementary, preparatory and secondary schools, of whom 234,500, or 50 per cent, were female. Women accounted for 69 per cent of participants in UNRWA's pre- and in-service teacher training courses, and for 63 per cent of trainees in UNRWA's technical/semi-professional courses. Of the 673 continuing UNRWA scholarships in 1999/2000, 45.3 per cent were held by women. In addition, 14 Palestinian women in Lebanon would benefit from a scholarship project during 1999/2000 addressed to women only and managed by UNRWA on behalf of the Canadian International Development Research Centre.

88. UNRWA provided maternal and child health care and family planning services and sustained full immunization coverage to women and children against vaccine-preventable diseases. Those services were supported by school health services as well as by health educational programmes on the prevention of tobacco use and the prevention of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases.

89. Difficult socio-economic conditions in refugee communities during the reporting period continued to create greater reliance on income earned by women. More than 50 per cent of UNRWA's special hardship case families, who received direct food and material assistance from the Agency, were headed by women. UNRWA's women-in-development programme provided a wide range of social, cultural and educational services at the community level. Seventy Women's Programme Centres served as focal points within the refugee community for UNRWA's work with women. From the beginning of 2000 until 30 July 2000, a total of 27,634 participants benefited from the various activities of the Centres, such as computer training, photography, English language courses, child care services for working women, group-guaranteed lending, awareness-raising campaigns on health, disability diagnosis and awareness and legal

counselling. The Agency is currently reviewing the quality of training at the Centres, with the aim of facilitating employment of women upon graduation.

90. During 1999/2000, UNRWA's income generation programme granted loans valued at $3.12 million to 3,716 women, who supported 20,050 dependants. Since 1994, the Solidarity Group Lending Programme has provided loans worth $11.39 million to 15,183 women organized in 2,271 solidarity groups. These women were granted loans at the end of each successful repayment cycle. The programme was self-sufficient with all operational costs and loan loss provision covered from revenues generated by lending and banking activities. The programme maintained an annual repayment rate of 98.65 per cent.

91. During the period under review, the ILO Arab regional office undertook a series of activities in support and assistance to Palestinian women:

- *Gender mainstreaming in the Ministry of Labour (Gaza and Ramallah)*

  The inter-ministerial coordinating committee for the advancement of women mainstreamed gender concerns in certain ministries. In August 2000, the ILO supported a workshop, held in Ramallah, to develop an action plan for the Ministry of Labour.

- *Strategy formulation on the promotion and development of women's entrepreneurship*

  Several activities were executed in the framework of a 1996-1999 training programme implemented by the International Training Centre of the ILO in Turin, Italy, to promote and develop Palestinian women's entrepreneurship. In particular, four courses to train trainers to develop technical capacities and nine technical workshops to enhance the knowledge and skills of women entrepreneurs were undertaken. In May 2000, a seminar comprising national governmental, non-governmental and private sector stakeholders was organized to design a national strategy for women's entrepreneurship development.

- *ILO multidisciplinary mission to the West Bank and Gaza*

  From 31 January to 11 February 2000, the ILO developed two project proposals for the advancement of women. The first project aimed to strengthen the inter-ministerial committee for the advancement of women and the second to promote and develop female entrepreneurship.

- *Capacity-building programme on gender, poverty and employment*

  In December 1999, a subregional planning seminar for the Arab States was organized in Beirut on an ILO capacity-building programme on gender, poverty and employment that resulted in national action plans. The action plan for West Bank and Gaza was developed into a draft project proposal early in 2000 and is expected to be developed further into a full-fledged project document.

92. In January 1999, the World Bank formally established a Consultative Council on Gender in the Middle East and North Africa Region in order to formulate solutions to the most pertinent gender concerns in the area. In the period under review, the World Bank undertook various assistance programmes and projects, including:

- *Comprehensive development framework*

  A programme to address the increasing need for a holistic integrated approach to development balancing macroeconomic stability with human, social and structural elements.

- *The Second Committee development project*

  A project designed and implemented with the full participation of women and included targeted interventions such as promoting women's centres and kindergartens.

- *The Palestinian NGO project*

  A project which financially and technically supported NGOs that targeted the poor and marginalized Palestinian population, 70 per cent of whom were women.

- *The education and health rehabilitation project*

  This project was completed in December 1999. It provided for appropriate and adequate sanitary facilities at school sites, promoted the development of teaching material free of gender

bias, and aimed at increasing girls' access to schools.

- *The pilot training centre for disadvantaged youth*

  Funded through the World Bank Development Market Place 2000 Competition, the centre would be created as part of a pilot project that targets poor rural young women and men who currently have no training skills useful in today's job market.

93. Based on its programme of cooperation with the Palestinian Authority for the years 1998-2000, UNICEF addresses gender issues through its programmes for Palestinian children and women.

94. UNICEF promotes advocacy for women's rights by increasing society's awareness of the scope and meaning of women's rights, non-discrimination and gender equality, using information from all its projects and education strategies, including better parenting, gender equity in education and life skills. The UNICEF strategy also supports an enabling environment that influences legislation and mobilizes resources for Palestinian women, in order to monitor and promote women's rights. Different types of media are used in pursuing that strategy, including television, radio, print media and theatre.

95. Within the women's health project, UNICEF supported the following activities aimed at improving the quality of life of Palestinian women:

- Eight-day training for 75 midwives from primary and secondary health care settings in the governmental sector as well as UNRWA and the Palestinian Red Crescent Society;
- Four-day workshop for 125 maternal care health professionals on the promotion of woman and child health and nutrition and the quality of services;
- Ten-day training for physicians and nurses within the obstetric and neonatal departments in four major hospitals;
- The maternal mortality survey being implemented in the West Bank, which would seek, inter alia, to identify the most common causes of maternal death, to strengthen the surveillance system in the country and to monitor the fate of orphans after the death of their mothers.

96. During the period under review, UNICEF supported a five-day training programme on first aid, health promotion, communication and leadership skills for 300 nursery teachers in 12 districts, undertaken within the better parenting initiative implemented with the Ministry of Social Affairs. UNICEF is currently supporting the following activities:

- A study on early marriage and dropouts in the Bethlehem district being conducted to understand the perception, attitude and practice related to early marriage, and to examine the relationship between early marriage and dropping out of school among females who marry early;
- An awareness-raising campaign on gender and development issues among students, grades 7 through 10, attending eight schools in the Bethlehem district;
- A review of new textbooks to assess whether they are gender sensitive. The results of the review would be shared with the Ministry of Education;
- Sixteen gender-training workshops targeting 400 education professionals in 8 districts (5 in the West Bank and 3 in Gaza). The training focuses on gender awareness and sensitization as well as on some basic skills to enable the education professionals to integrate gender into the teaching process.

97. Gender is mainstreamed in both projects of the advocacy and capacity-building programme: the planning, policy formulation and monitoring project and the children and women in need of special protection project. During the period under review, UNICEF worked on the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey II (still to be completed) aimed at providing sex-disaggregated data on Palestinian children and women. Furthermore, UNICEF provided:

- Technical and financial support to the Palestinian Authority in drafting the Palestinian Child Rights Charter and ensuring that it was gender sensitive;
- Support to the Palestinian Ministry of Social Affairs in carrying out a study of orphanages providing long-term residential care with emphasis on the under-served girl child;
- Support to efforts aimed at increasing media coverage of Palestinian children and women, jointly with the Ministry of Information;

- Support to the creation of a network of NGOs working to combat violence against women.

3. Conclusions

98. In the reporting period, the Palestinian Authority, civil society groups and organizations of the United Nations system made considerable efforts to improve the economic and social conditions of Palestinian women. Yet, despite these efforts and in spite of the positive trends of the domestic Palestinian economy in the period under review, women still experienced unequal access to the labour market and income-generating activities and continued to have higher unemployment rates than men. Thus, the situation of women still requires special attention.

99. The status and living conditions of Palestinian women are linked to the achievement of progress in the peace process. Women living in the occupied territories continued to be directly affected by Israeli policies, especially the closure hindering the efforts undertaken by the Palestinian Authority, civil society groups and organizations of the United Nations aimed at advancing women.

100. Towards the end of the reporting period, violence between Israeli security forces and Palestinian civilians erupted in the occupied territories creating great concern as it jeopardized the peace process and hindered assistance efforts by the organizations of the United Nations system. It is important that United Nations entities continue to be able to operate in the occupied territories and that efforts are made to continue working for the advancement and empowerment of Palestinian women. It is particularly important that Palestinian women continue to be given assistance in areas such as education, health, social services and micro-credit and that efforts are made to increase their full and equal participation in decision-making and peace programmes.

101. The gender perspective should continue to be fully integrated in international assistance programmes, through inter alia, greater gender analysis and the collection of sex-disaggregated data, which is currently insufficient. Although the reports of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People in the Occupied Territories, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Process and the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on Palestinian Territories occupied since 1967 all provided valuable information on the situation in the occupied territories, they still lack a thorough gender analysis. Thus, it is important to introduce a gender perspective in all studies and reports undertaken by the United Nations on the situation of Palestinian women.

B. Release of women and children taken hostage, including those subsequently imprisoned in armed conflict

102. At its forty-fourth session, the Commission on the Status of Women adopted resolution 44/1 on the release of women and children taken hostage, including those subsequently imprisoned, in armed conflict. The Commission on the Status of Women requested the Secretary-General to prepare, taking into account the information provided by Member States and relevant international organizations, a report on the implementation of resolution 44/1 for submission to the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-fifth session in 2001. In pursuance of this mandate, on 20 July 2000, the Secretary-General sent a note verbale to all States Members of the United Nations. As of 30 November 2000, the Secretariat had received a total of 17 replies from Member States and 12 replies from relevant entities of the United Nations system.

103. Fourteen Member States reported that they were not involved in armed conflicts, one Member State reported that the country's internal violence had assumed the characteristics of armed conflict and two Member States reported that their citizens, including women and children, were still kept prisoners by the Government of neighbouring countries with which they had been in conflict.

104. The Governments of Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, El Salvador, Marshall Islands, Morocco, Nauru, Portugal, Thailand and the United Republic of Tanzania reported that the situation described in resolution 44/1 did not exist in their respective countries.

105. Although not involved in situations of armed conflicts, the Governments of Argentina, China and the Philippines reported support for international humanitarian law and support for international community efforts to stop and prevent conflicts in order to safeguard the rights of women and children. In

addition, the Government of the Philippines also stated its support for resolution 44/1 and called for the need to create a monitoring body on the proper implementation of the resolution and to ensure that violators were forced to comply.

106. The Government of Spain reported that, although the issue of armed conflict did not affect it directly, the Government was involved in cooperation and development projects in Latin America, including in many countries suffering from instability and violence deriving from wars, where mainly women and children were affected. Some of these projects were implemented by the Institute of Women through its "Women and Development" programme, which, inter alia, aimed to improve the situation of victims, strengthen good governance and prevent conflicts.

107. The Government of Bolivia reported that, although there were no armed conflicts within the country nor between Bolivia and its neighbouring countries, the eradication of cocaine had created a problem of violence in the Chapare area and other rural areas, which had the characteristics of armed conflict and which affected mainly women and children. The Government of Bolivia also stated its support for resolution 44/1 and for international humanitarian law aimed at protecting women and children in situations of armed conflict.

108. The Government of Azerbaijan reported that as a result of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, a total of 4,959 citizens of Azerbaijan were counted as missing, including 71 children, 320 women and 358 elderly people. Efforts of the State Commission of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Prisoners of War, Hostages and Missing People in the 1992-2000 period resulted in the release from Armenian captivity of a total of 1,086 persons, including 67 children, 243 women and 246 elderly persons. The Government reported that, in order to address the issue, in December 1999, it advanced a new initiative in the Committee for Political Issues of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe confirming that the problems of prisoners of war, hostages and missing people should be solved in accordance with the articles of the Geneva Convention.

109. The Government of Kuwait reported that, as a result of the 1990 Iraqi occupation of Kuwait, a total of 605 persons, including 7 Kuwaiti women, were held in detention in Iraq. The Government called for the immediate publication by Iraq of the names of the prisoners who were still alive as well as those who had died. It stated that the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) should be allowed to perform the assigned tasks in Iraqi prisons and other places of detention in accordance with the Geneva Conventions. The Government of Kuwait stated that Iraq should expedite the tracing process and facilitate the flow of information related to cases of persons still kept in detention. It also stated that the Security Council should exert the necessary pressure on Iraq in order to bring this humanitarian issue to a conclusion, that this issue should be raised in the Security Council each time matters relating to Iraq's compliance with Council resolutions were addressed, and that Iraq's inadequate response to this issue should be taken into account whenever new resolutions were adopted.

110. The Secretariat also requested information from relevant entities of the United Nations system.

111. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations provided information from six of its field missions. The United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) reported that the conflict in Sierra Leone had been, and continued to be, characterized by a high incidence of abductions of civilians, including men, women and children, for the purposes of forced recruitment, sexual slavery and forced labour. It also reported that many women and girls were forced to become the "bush wives" of their abductors and that social reintegration of released abductees was very difficult due to the stigmatization that accompanied rape and the resulting pregnancies.

112. UNAMSIL reported that the Committee for the Release of Prisoners of War and Non-Combatants, which was established in July 1999 in accordance with the Lomé Peace Agreement, continued to meet on a biweekly basis despite the renewed instances of fighting in Sierra Leone. It designated its representatives to carry out regular fact-finding missions that served to disseminate information about its activities and any options available to the released abductees.

113. The United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) reported that, according to information collected by the ICRC, following the transfer of prisoners from Kosovo to Serbia in June 1999, there were still 950 persons from Kosovo who remained in detention in Serbia, including 6 women and 6 minors.

114. Since it did not have a mandate to operate within Serbia, UNMIK was not able to monitor directly the conditions or proceedings against the women and children held in detention in Serbia. However, it continued to highlight the issue of these prisoners and attempted to rally international support to advocate for their release. UNMIK also reported that on 1 September 2000, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights appointed a Special Envoy on persons deprived of liberty in connection with the Kosovo crisis in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to seek comprehensive solutions to the problem of missing persons and detainees from Kosovo.

115. It was reported by the United Nations Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) that, in its area of responsibility, the long-standing practice of hostage taking, in which women were sometimes the victims, continued. These cases were indirectly related to the 1992-1993 armed conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia, which produced difficult socio-economic conditions, a lack of governance and effective law enforcement. UNOMIG reported that on 1 June 2000, a UNOMIG patrol, including a woman, was taken hostage for five days in the Kadori Valley and that on 4 August 2000, two international field staff workers of the ICRC, both women, together with their male local driver, were kidnapped and held for 10 days in the Pankisi Gorge.

116. UNOMIG reported that in several regions of Georgia, including Abkhazia, one of the greatest threats to the local population, representatives of the international humanitarian organizations and United Nations personnel, seemed to come from loosely organized and poorly commanded paramilitary organizations, some of which may be supported by political circles while others were exclusively criminally motivated.

117. UNOMIG stated that the Commission on the Status of Women should consider the plight of women and children living in "frozen armed conflict" where active military operations have ceased, but where armed combatants remain active. It stated that the situation of women and children in "frozen armed conflict" should also be reflected in the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of resolution 44/1.

118. The United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) reported that, further to the violence which erupted in East Timor around the ballot of last year, more than 250,000 East Timorese, among them women and children, were forced over the border to West Timor, Indonesia, where they were kept in camps, often under the control of militia groups, and where access to basic needs and services remained poor. UNTAET reported that, in cooperation with UNHCR, UNICEF and international NGOs, more than 250 separated children were returned to their families in East Timor. A further 180 children were also reunited with their families through the Family Reunion Programme of UNTAET and UNHCR, aiming to bring together separated families from each side of the border.

119. The United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) stated that it had no relevant information related to the implementation of resolution 44/1 and the United Nations Mission of Observers in Prevlaka (UNMOP) reported that, given its military observer mandate, it has neither the authority, nor the resources or the capability to investigate such matters.

120. In its regular work, the Department of Public Information reported that it had contributed to the implementation of resolution 44/1, particularly through the widespread dissemination of the international instruments on the advancement of women and the human rights of women and children (i.e., the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol), the coverage and promotion of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the organization of press conferences in conjunction with special meetings and awareness-raising activities on the issue.

121. No specific information on women and children taken hostage was provided by OHCHR, UNDP, UNRWA, ECA or ESCWA.

Notes

[1] The Egypt Country Team included representatives of: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), International Labour Organization (ILO), International Organization for Migration (IOM), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO),

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), World Health Organization (WHO), and the World Bank.

[2] Technical Review Meeting. Assessment of Gender Mainstreaming and the Empowerment of Women in Sub-Saharan Africa. A Review of UNDP Support Activities, 20-21 March 2000.

[3] In September 1999, the Secretary-General reconfigured the mandate of the United Nations Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories. His title was changed to United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority. In addition to his responsibilities relating to the occupied Palestinian territory, the Special Coordinator now also has responsibilities for coordinating United Nations development assistance related to the peace process in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic (A/55/137-E/2000/95, para. 2).

[4] See United Nations Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories report, Spring 2000, Executive Summary.

[5] Ibid.